

CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

IDEAS TO PROMOTE ATTENTION & CONCENTRATION

These are **5 Key Principles** to help you increase the chances of a child maintaining their attention and concentration to a task.

Brevity:

- Attention and concentration are greatest in short activities.
- Break down a task in to smaller sections and present these one at a time with breaks in the middle.
- Push for quality rather than quantity.
- Work within success; if they can stay in circle well for 20 seconds, use this as your baselines and increase your time from this point.



Variety:

- Attention may flag on the second presentation of a task.
- Attention can be maximised by presenting the material in slightly different format or with different resources, eg using chalk instead of colouring pens.
- A regular change of position can help them to maintain their attention, eg lying on tummy, sitting on the floor, kneeling.

Environment: this includes yourself!

- Try a “fidget” toy, such as a squeeze ball. The child can fidget and squeeze this to help them concentrate and pay attention when listening to instructions, stories, etc.
- Using a “defined” spot for them, eg carpet square, bucket seat.
- Allow them to sit beside the teacher to help maintain attention.
- Reduce clutter as much as possible, eg only have the activity you are doing on the table.
- Make full eye contact with the child as often as possible to encourage attention and focus.



Structure/Routine:

- A consistent routine, with an organised format to complete activities is ideal for learning.
- Use timers to show how long an activity will last, such as a large sand timer.
- Give concrete goals, eg 3 more tasks, 5 more pages.
- Provide verbal and visual cues where possible.



Praise:

Give lots of descriptive praise: make sure this is related to attention and concentration as well as the activity itself, eg “good sitting at the table”; “good listening to the story”.



Activity Ideas:



Vertical surfaces

Use for art tasks, eg whiteboard, easel. This improves concentration and increases shoulder stability.

Memory card games

Play a game where you have to find the pairs, turning over cards, 2 at a time. Start with 10 cards and build up.

Early board games

Try making your own games by drawing squares on paper. Ask questions and your child moves ahead 2 spaces if correct and stays the same if incorrect. The winner is first to get to the end of the track.

Listening games

You can play this game – say 3 words and one is the odd one out, eg table, chair, sand.

Play Simon Says

Play with 2 or 3 instructions, such as clap twice then touch your toes, walk to the door, knock twice, then open the door. Play musical bobs or statues.

Building and construction

Encourage your child to work slowly and carefully. Help them plan and think about alternatives. What do we need? What should we do?